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The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Identical letters dated 1 February 2001 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

I wish to convey to you the serious concern of the Palestinian leadership regarding the possible use by Israel, the occupying Power, of depleted uranium shells against Palestinian targets, especially during the more recent and intensified Israeli military campaign over the last few months. Several reports have indicated that Israel has used such ammunition, causing great anxiety among the Palestinian people in the occupied territory.

In this connection, on 30 January 2001, the Israeli army issued a press statement in which it stated that "the Israeli army has never utilized these munitions against any civilian population". This language can only indicate that the Israeli army does indeed possess this kind of ammunition in its arsenal and that it has used it in the past. Further, the issue of "civilian population" remains a matter of definition, as Israel has repeatedly indicated in the past. In our opinion, this press statement alone justifies raising the issue in a serious way and calls for field inspection by appropriate, trained inspectors.

We call upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in cooperation with the Security Council, to give this important matter the necessary attention, including looking into the possibilities of the above-mentioned inspection.

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I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter distributed as an official document of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 40, 41 and 85, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nasser **Al-Kidwa**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations